A Rising Clamor is Demanding HUMANE KILLING

By GWEN CASH

AS A CANADIAN (female) I feel pretty ashamed of myself.

Why?

Because I have taken no part in the 12-year-old campaign members of the various branches of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals have been waging all over Canada to have food animals—animals we eat—killed in a humane way.

I haven't even taken time to write to my member about the bill that was before Parliament last year and withdrawn—Heaven knows why. Or urged that instead of further "studying" the question, as the Speech from the Throne this session predicated, the thing should be made law right away, quick.

If I'd thought at all about how cattle become the steaks I so much enjoy eating, I naturally assumed that a country like Canada handled it in a decent way. As for conjecturing if pigs suffer as they're converted into those succulent roasts other people eat but which I can't—not because I had a Jewish father but because pork gives me a pain—I hadn't given that a thought either.

But I did after meeting and talking to Bill Leach, ex-bomber command navigator, sailing man—he has a half-share in the 20-foot sloop Whisper—bachelor, stock and bonds man, animal lover and now for the third year president of the Victoria Branch of the SPCA. Born in Canada (Rivers, near Winnipeg of Irish parents but brought up and educated in Dublin, he has all the Irishman's charm and persuasiveness besides being red hot about his subject.

And if you think humane killing is a queer thing to talk about at a party, let me tell you there are lots worse.

"The Americans studied this business of humane killing of food animals for 39 long years," said Bill. "Last year they got around to passing a law about it. Canada is the last major country without such a law. Switzerland had one ages ago. So had England, Germany, all the Scandinavian countries. Not the Latins, of course—Latins are notoriously insensitive to the sufferings of animals."

He told me something about the ghastly way pigs are slaughtered in Canada.

I remembered the clever little pig I'd had for a pet as a child.

Pigs have long been rightly considered intelligent beasts. The late George Orwell just naturally made the boss animal in his famous satire, "Animal Farm," a pig. Nursery rhymes and stories from the beginning of time have always endowed pigs with human qualities. What infant doesn't know the chant "One Little Pig Went to Market"? And it wasn't for lack of perspicacity Lewis Carrol had the Duchess' baby in Alice in Wonderland change into a piglet. "'There really isn't much difference,' thought Alice as she watched it trot away."

Old-time circuses always had educated pigs to amuse and astonish their audiences.

It's of these clever, almost human animals, Jean Howarth, Vancouver journalist, wrote after visiting the slaughter yards in 1957.

"Pigs are a herd animal. They can squeal warnings to each other of approaching danger. The shackled and dying pigs up front were screeching their warning to their brothers coming up behind. The brothers behind were squealing it down to the hundreds waiting below. It was a pandemonium of terror that drowned out the voice of my human guide."

"But I'm sure I've read somewhere," I said, "that the flesh of an animal killed in fear is not nearly as good as that of one killed humanely?"

"So lots of people believe," Mr. Leach rejoined. "Today, though, even the Meat Packers Council of Canada is in favor of humane killing. The workers in the plants have long been. They are sick of the gore and the stench, the screeching and the agony. They'd welcome having the animals dispatched by shot gun or, as it's done in some plants south of the border, by carbon-dioxide."

Bill Leach told me the SPCA of British Columbia had been the spearhead of the fight for humane killing and B.C.'s Davie Fulton, minister of justice, introduced the 1957 bill which got to first and second reading before it, alas, fell by the wayside. Another bill was introduced last year, said Bill, but was withdrawn without adequate reason being given.

"This year is a crucial year," he told me. "Everyone hating the savagery of our present slaughterhouses is peppering their members with letters. I'm told Davie Fulton has as many as 2,000 a month, not just from B.C. but from all over Canada. All it needs is an amendment to the Criminal Code requiring that food animals be killed instantly, first having been rendered unconscious by a humane method. It will cost the packers something, of course, to change their methods; which, in turn, I suppose, the public, as always, will pay. But it has to come."

According to an American weekly, 2,000,000 women of the American Humane Society joined with 11,000,000 members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, plus the entire membership of the National Council of Catholics, to besiege newspaper editors, luncheon clubs, literary groups and PTA meetings to get humane killing.

BILL LEACH . . . fight on his hands.
—Islander photo by Gwen Cash

"In the end," said this magazine, "the American Meat Institute gallantly deferred to the ladies, promising to adopt humane slaughtering methods. 'We can't beat 'em,' a spokesman sighed, 'so we'll join 'em.'"

But even now the humane slaughter bill in the States does not specifically require new slaughtering methods but merely prohibits the government from buying meat slaughtered by any other means. Of course this is a potent threat since Uncle Sam buys about a billion and a half dollars worth of meat a year.

But Canada can do better.

SCHOOLS TO COMPETE FOR COLONIST PRIZES

(Continued from Page 12)

grade X cast, and "The Crimson Cocoanut," directed by Mrs. Irene Lee. The former is a quietly amusing comedy with eight girls, and the latter a rather satirical farce. The 'Waiter," lead part in Ian Hay Beith's comedy, is played by Larry Brooks.

"Royal Suspect" and "A Story of Ville Marie" both come from Esquimalt, the former directed by Gwen Hewlings and the latter by Barbara Lang. "Royal Suspect" is a tale of French revolutionary days with Ivy-Ann Melnyk in the lead; Bob Wheeldon as the "Governor" and Bill McMillan as "Anton Lefebre." There are about 22 in this play.

The production at Victoria High is a historical play by T. B. Morris, "Stew for Simon." Bill Hubbard is "Simon" with Penny Tisdall, as "Matilda," Maureen Tilson as "Ursula," Sylvia Mobey as "Eleanore" and Sharon June as "Joan." This comedy of the 14th century is directed by T. W. Mayne.

"The Ass and the Philosophers" will be presented by Belmont Senior High with Mrs. Phyllis Dulmage directing. The philosophers, "Academus" and "Didymus," are Gary Tindall and Jim Cosh. The ass does not appear. Lucille Hull plays "Clytie" and dancer, Gina Hiscock, is "Chloe."

North Saanich High School makes a welcome return to the festival with Rudolf Bessier's 'The Barretts of Wimpole Street." Under the skilled direction of Gil Bunch, this excellent play should certainly provide both competition and entertainment.

The final entry comes from Mount Douglas High School whose productions have been so successful recently. At the time of writing, the entry is not completely settled but, even if it comes as a surprise, it will no doubt be a pleasant one.

The adjudicator will be Mrs. Anne Mossman of Yellow Point, B.C. Three plays are chosen for the honor performance on Saturday, March 14. In the senior division there will be nominations for scholarships for the best actress and best actor. The Daily Colonist prizes go to the best actress and actor at the junior high level. And there are awards for the best elementary players.

But, mainly, it's all a barrel of fun!

Wendy Glover plays lead role in Oaklands Elementary's "Beauty and the Beast."